DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 088 821 SP 007 791

AUTHOR	Clements, Millard
TITLE	Alternatives in Teacher Education.
PUB DATE	Apr 74
NOTE	16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 15-19, 1974
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS	Definitions; Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; *Humanism; *Humanization; Performance Based Teacher Education; Scientific Methodology; Scientific Principles; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

This paper on alternatives in teacher education begins by analyzing the current emphasis on the scientific approach in education. The author finds the promise of the scientific approach to be illusory. He defines it as education that promotes behavior change in some desirable direction. However, this definition, which the author finds equally serviceable for toothpaste salesmen and terrorists, makes the clients of educators not the children but the system of schooling itself and its elite to whom educators owe whatever loyalty they possess. Working on the premise that, for the present, teacher education must be changed in relation to existing schools, the author advocates examining current educational myths, such as the myth of Cultural Deprivation, which makes the victims responsible and makes the responsible into victims. Working on a scientific approach with a humanistic basis, the author promotes a human science of people whose purpose in professional education should be to deepen our awareness of what it means to be human, to use language, and to grow up in the diverse arrangements that cut planet affords. This definition of education transforms "schools" from institutions of technological management into complex arrangements for authentic work and interesting conversation. (JA)

ED 088821

25.06

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
MILLARD CLEMENTS
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

ALTERNATIVES IN TEACHER EDUCATION*

by

Millard Clements

American Educational Research Association

Annual Meeting April 15-19, 1974

Chicago, Illinois

Session # 25.06

SP007 751

*Copyright, 1974

Alternatives in Teacher Education

In this discussion I want to explore the following hypothesis:

> The search for new and better approaches to teacher education, as a remedy to educational difficulties in our major cities and elsewhere, is a futile enterprise.

This hypothesis expresses two concerns that can be stated as questions:

1. What might "improve" teacher education?
2. If teacher education were "improved," would this resolve or help resolve our educational difficulties?

The answer to the first question is, of course, complicated and worth exploration. A strong case can be made that the answer to the second question is, "No." If this is true, how should we think about the challenge of education today?

What would improve teacher education today?

Our experience and our professional understanding would suggest such recommendations as these:

1. We should develop a more scientific approach to teacher training.
2. We should be more concerned with affective aspects of the teaching situation.
3. We should develop more flexible and adaptable programs in order to accommodate the diversity of student interests, motivations and ability.
4. We should be more concerned with the distinctive culture and life style of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and other oppressed people.

5. We should offer more intensive field experiences and avoid empty theory.

Other suggestions could be made, but these illustrate opinions that are commonly expressed. Let us think about these opinions and learn what we can about the improvement of education.

What is the promise of Science as a basis for the improvement of education?

Science, of course, means many things. It means Albert Einstein, and B.F. Skinner; it means Gregory Bateson and A.R. Jensen; it means C. Wright Mills and R. Hernstein. What is science in education? The appeal of science as a holy oracle that will finally resolve the many difficulties of education has been both irresistible and ephemeral.

Science has provided the comfort of respectability and the safety of irrelevance because science in the context of education has tended to preserve the conduct of schooling from the scrutiny of scholarship. To researchers in education, science usually means either the effort to manipulate the behavior of children within the unexamined political structure and organization of existing schools, or voyeuristic preoccupation with the private lives of poor and oppressed people.

To the managers of schools, science has meant a rhetoric of scholarship, the aura of science without the inconvenience of seriously questioning fundamental political realities of the practice of schooling.

Science in education has been unhelpful for children and teachers because it does not inquire into basic educational processes. It has been a disaster for scholarship dealing with schooling because it has made research in education politically, socially and ethically trivial.

The generally accepted definition of education that forms the basis of "science" in education is: Education is the changing of behavior in some desirable direction.

This definition of education is equally serviceable for toothpaste salesmen, political propagandists or terrorist organizations. It makes of selling, schooling or terror a purely technical enterprise. Attention is not given to people and their hopes and dreams; it is given to behaviors, reactions, or responses that reinforcements may selectively "stamp in."

Schooling is not thought of as an encounter of human beings that is in many respects problematic and equal; it is conceived of as manipulation of the weak by the strong. Just as engineers build bridges where political decisions say they must be placed, researchers in education seek to "stamp in" the behaviors that come to be prescribed.

We know that prisoners of war can be effectively brain-washed, that behavioral scientists can devise ingenious ways to sell soap, cars and political candidates. These all involve changes of behavior in some desirable direction from some point of view.

From the point of view of "science" in education: the clients of professionals in education are not the children in school; education is manipulation of young people in the higher interest of society and the state; professionals in education have as their clients the system of schooling itself and its elite to whom they owe whatever loyalty they possess. Now our schools exist as vast arrangements of privileged interests. Unions, pension rights, salesmen and professors live off the enterprise of schooling. Whatever science is done, whatever words are voiced, they must not question these privileges; they must not reveal the political realities of school life.

Today science in education provides us with the proliferating vocabulary of behavior modification, performance based teacher education, and behavioral definitions of education objectives. A number of states have made commitments to adoption of competency based approaches to teacher certification. The federal government and many universities are deeply involved in the effort to specify and manage behavior. Benjamin Rosner expresses his hope for this science in this way:

> Competency based teacher education is the catalyst that can revitalize the teacher education enterprise.[1]
>
> It can be expected that the cornerstone of teacher education curriculum reform will be research and development in teacher behavior.[2]

---

[1]Benjamin Rosner, "The Promise of Competency-Based Teacher Education," Education Quarterly, Spring, 1973, Vol. IV, 3, p. 2.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

The scientific performance based approach to education is the current fad of our profession. It is another in a long line of fads, few of which have confronted fundamental issues that face our society. This fad, as many others, provides access to federal and private funding, new publishing ventures and proximity to political centers of power. In time it will be replaced with another innovation of the moment that will provide a new excuse to continue to avoid dealing with the deep problems of our society.

Performance based teacher education's central idea is simply another statement of the basic scientific definition of education. From this perspective, education is a human engineering problem that requires 1) specification and political approval of human behaviors that will then be said to be desirable, and 2) behavior management procedures that will tend to stamp in government endorsed good behaviors and stamp out government disapproved bad behaviors. Imagine, for a moment, what this might mean for the production of White House endorsed competency based education for journalists, lawyers, economists or teachers.

Scientific performance based education politicizes the relationship between teacher and taught by assigning to teachers the role of technical, neutral, value free behavior manager. Teachers are defined to be autonomous technicians whose assigned responsibility is to mold and shape, predict and control the

lives of others. Students, people, children, are simply things, repertoires of behaviors to be shaped by whomever gets to be engineer. Fredric J. McDonald expresses this perspective with these words:

> The content of this chapter is the modification of teaching behavior treated as a general class of behaviors. Teacher education programs may be conceptualized as behavior modification systems designed to modify complex behavioral repertoires which are adaptable to a variety of learning problems. Developing a teacher education program which applies behavior modification concepts would be simpler if we knew how to use these principles to control student learning. At the present time, however, only a relatively small number of student behaviors can be brought under behavioral control by applying these principles.[1]

Performance based education politicizes and trivializes the meaning of knowledge and understanding by transforming social, historical, literary and scientific awareness and insight that arises out of personal struggles into standardized information that can be recorded, dispensed by computers and technicians.

We are experiencing today what uncivilized technology has done to our rivers, lakes, lands and the air we breathe. Scientific performance based education is a similar expression of the impulse to believe that technology can solve our ethical problems: how should we live with one another and with the other life forms with which we share this planet?

---

[1]Fredric J. McDonald, "Behavior Modification in Teacher Education," in Carl E. Thousen (Ed.), Behavior Modification in Education. The 72nd Yearbook of the Study of Education, 1973, p. 41.

Performance based education should be resisted because it is an approach to education that exacerbates and illustrates the ironies of the way we live with one another and has little possibility of helping young people to discover beauty, civic purpose or to engage in honest labors.

Performance based education is rooted in a deep error of understanding: it presupposes that the basic problems we face have to do with the specification and management of aspirations that we clearly understand. The basic question that citizens, professionals and critics alike should ask is this: In our world today, what is worth knowing? What is worth doing? What is a wise, generous, prudent use of the lives of children of compulsory school age? Scientific performance based education ignores this as a problem and thus, ignores the basic challenge to think about educational matters at all.

Can teacher education be improved in other ways?

If the promise of science is illusory, what hope is there in the promise of nurtured sensitivity, greater program flexibility, deeper cultural awareness, and more intensive field experiences? All of these "improvements" are also based on the same premise as the approach of science: education and teacher education is involved in the specification and management of aspirations that we clearly understand. More sensitivity,

deeper cultural awareness and more extensive field experiences can only improve the management skills of teachers who are involved in an enterprise whose purpose and function is known.

What would improve teacher education? Some of these suggestions are probably sensible. But does it matter? We cannot improve teacher education in isolation from the conduct of schooling. Improved teachers must go into existing schools.

Schools are selecting and processing arrangements. As schools work today, highly talented, committed, creative teachers are often driven from them in despair. Mature, thoughtful students often find school life a boring humiliation. A few heroic teachers in a school, just as a few heroic guards in a prison, are not going to change the social and political meaning of school or prison. What is wrong with school and what is wrong with prison is the social and political meaning of prison and school life. Serious thought about educational matters involves confronting crises of institutions that may lead to the invention of new institutions appropriate for the times in which we live.

An important challenge to think about education is to begin to identify and examine our mythologies, the stories that we tell ourselves about what we are doing that obscure the realities of our everyday professional lives. One of the most popular mythic conceptions of recent years is the story of cultural deprivation.

Cultural Deprivation, as a myth, and as ideology, lightens the burden of responsibility, undermines accountability, and assuages whatever feelings of guilt and unease professional elites may have. The myth has the following effects:

1. It fixes the causes of school troubles on the difficulties of children and their families and not on the professionals who operate the schools.

2. It directs research to study these causes, and not the functional characteristics of the schools.

3. It proposes that the remedy for school trouble lies in making children even more ready for the standard school service, and not creating and evaluating many different school arrangements for the many different children.

4. It affirms the expectation that "education" will be ineffective with many children, and does not affirm any obligation to succeed.

The myth of Cultural Deprivation provides an effective solution to professional elites who wish to seek rationalizations for their failures. Dramatically:

1. It makes victims responsible and the responsible into victims.

2. It preserves black and white elites from accountability.

3. It excuses the policies, practices, and the institution of schooling from study and scrutiny.

Belief in this myth can provide oppressed city professional elites with deep consolation and an opportunity for professional scholarship; it can occupy all their time so that they will never have to challenge or even consider the institutions that create the conditions they so humanely deplore.

The most important function of the Comforting Myth is that it obscures responsibility:

1. No one is responsible for the urban schools. These are children whom the professionals can ethically fail.

2. No one is accountable. Good intentions or militant rhetoric legitimate failure.

3. The schools are ignored as subjects of critical inquiry. Voyeurism into the social difficulties of non-white families is a scholarship of despair that leads to no action by the schools and preserves the present system of elite privileges.

The triumph of the Comforting Myth is the disguise of calamity by making it intelligible, its distortion of responsibility by assigning it to the powerless, and its assistance to professional elites by legitimatizing their power. This myth is essential to the elite professionals who are responsible for calamities about which they can do nothing, for they are well intentioned and kindly. If they are to live with their complicity and retain their humanistic self-regard, they must be absolved of responsibility and permitted the salvation of unreserved expression of compassion.

What is the challenge we face today?

As we seek to stop being deluded about the myth of cultural deprivation, we can begin to confront the myth of science, manipulation and technology as the holy oracle that will resolve our social conflicts.

The politics of science in education, as it is to be found in plans for teacher education, curriculum planning and educational reform, is based on a conception of the world and of human beings that tends to reduce the capacity of people to see themselves as potent moral actors: managers have turned themselves into eunuchs deliberately and they are seeking to induce the managed to join their happy state. If we are to resist this style of science and education we must confront its major premises and we must make this confrontation a fundamental aspect of our work and of our everyday life.

How can we confront the deep cultural imperative that directs us to exploit nature to the point of making this planet dangerously unclean and directs us to exploit each other to the point of creating human beings modeled after the machines?

What image of human beings should we project?

A science of human beings should take human beings to be praxiological, purposive creatures whose unique characteristic is that they are meaning-giving and fundamentally creative.

What image of professionals should we project?

A scientist, a professional, or a teacher is one more human being caught up in the web of life. Science, teaching, or delinquency are social activities about which one can seek

understanding. All social activities have social and political meaning. An honest professional worker must constantly re-examine his or her own professional work and private life in order to identify and criticize the ethical, political and social implications of his or her own concepts and methodologies.

What purposes should a human science of human beings serve?

The purpose of a human science of human beings in professional education should be to deepen our awareness of what it means to be human, to use language and to grow up in the diverse arrangements that our planet affords. In light of that awareness, a human science of human beings would seek to become aware of and to assess the effects of institutions of the praxis and purpose of individuals.

What image of knowledge should we project?

The knowledge that any one of us may generate arises out of personal struggles and interests. It is never neutral, never non-political, never about them; it is always about us, the knowers in political relationships with the known. The politics of this relationship must be an explicit part of whatever it is that we come to say that we know.

These four principles of a human science of human beings in professional education have deep implications for the definition and conduct of education and teacher education for the practice of educational scholarship generally. Rather

than define education as the change of behavior in some desirable direction, we could use this definition:

> Education is the provision of opportunities for interesting and honest work and occasions for fruitful conversations about one's work, ideas, society and life in general.

The value of this definition is that it assigns to professionals in education entirely new responsibilities:

1. To involve each praxiological person in honest work and significant conversation.

2. To provide many different work opportunities for the many different individuals who seek the challenge of work and conversation.

3. To assess the quality of school offerings in terms of the variety and authenticity of work going on and in the quality of conversation and interpersonal relationships to be found in educational contexts.

This definition of education transforms "schools" from institutions of technological management into complex arrangements for authentic work and interesting conversation. The assessment of this service would depend upon an evaluation of qualitative aspects of the ambience of life of what might still be called schools, or at least schooling.

To think through what this might mean for the many communities and the many individuals of our nations should be a mission of a human science of human beings.

If this kind of scholarship began to develop, then as we deepened our awareness we could bring greater insight to the responsibilities of evaluation of educational activities.

Education is a moral and political enterprise and the scholarship that is important to it is the effort to assess the moral and political value of the experiences that are imposed upon children. What we need to know is if the life a child leads in a compulsory situation is worth living. The following questions suggest a range of important concerns:

1. Are the tasks each student is called upon to do honest?
2. Are the materials that a student is called upon to read and consider honorable in their treatment of ideas and issues?
3. Are the physical arrangements for school work conducive to serious engagement?
4. Are the interpersonal relationships among young people and adults without violation of praxis?

The concern for educational scholarship should be with the authenticity of the encounters with work and ideas rather than behavior manipulation. It should be concerned with the quality of interpersonal relationships rather than with the establishment of management caste systems. This kind of scholarship would not only be an exhilarating adventure, it might contribute to the possible survival of autonomous human beings.

If knowledge is struggle and awareness rather than information about tactics for management, if teaching is conversation and community rather than behavior modification, if people are to be thought of as moral actors rather than

things to be regulated in experimental studies, then we will have to re-think and reconstruct the details of arranging the work opportunities for children and the procedures for seeking awareness of ourselves and of each other. That reconsideration is the fundamental challenge of a human science of human beings and of professional education.

What then are genuine alternatives in teacher education? One alternative is simply the work of the profession: the examination of the mythologies of our understanding of education. What is the social and political meaning of our vocabulary? Of our professional customs? Of our preoccupation with psychology? And of our technological stance? Another alternative is to invent relationships between teacher and taught that affirm the praxis of individuals, the integrity of work, and the political vulnerability of ideas. What we need is not better prisons or better schools, but new ways for young people to grow into our society.